



Robert C. Booker
Opening Remarks at SWAC 31
Glendale Civic Center, January 25, 2008

Thank you for being here today, for sharing your energy and knowledge with each other, and joining together as members of the Arizona Arts Industry.

I am lucky to work with a great group of **Arts Commissioners**. These individuals all appointed by the Governor serve non-salaried, volunteer, three-year terms.

They are educators, artists, business leaders, and arts administrators.

They set the policies that enable the commission staff to serve our citizens through thoughtful programming, innovative approaches to arts learning, convenings, and grantmaking. Thank you Commissioners for being with us today.

The arts are a bridge between cultures and they are essential for helping our children take pride in their heritage and understand the communities of their classmates.

According to a recent study in the State of Oklahoma entitled, *Arts at the Core of Learning Initiative*:

Arts Education builds a school climate of high expectation, discipline, and academic rigor;

Arts Education strengthens student problem-solving and critical thinking skills, adding to overall academic achievement and school success; and

Arts Education helps students develop a sense of craftsmanship, quality task performance, and goal setting—skills needed to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

And as you all know, Arts Education can help our troubled youth, providing an alternative to destructive behavior and another way for students to approach learning

We as an arts industry know these things. We also know that the arts define our cultures, grow our communities, attract businesses, and bring dollars into our towns and cities.

You have heard it before but in one year the economic impact of the arts in Phoenix alone was \$361 million dollars in expenditures. The industry supported 11,164 jobs and provided \$17 million dollars in local tax revenues.

Those are big numbers in any industry. But we take some modest pride in knowing it is our industry—**The Arts Industry of Arizona.**

My opening remarks today must also include a call to action. The Arizona State Legislature is facing one of the largest budget deficits in recent history. The current projections show a deficit of \$1.2 billion in the current fiscal year, and with deficits of \$1.7 million, \$1.9 million and \$1.7 million for the next three fiscal years.

There are already discussions among some of our legislative leaders about raiding the \$20 million ArtShare Endowment that together as an arts and business community we worked to grow through state appropriations over the past 10 years. This endowment established by a Republican governor and now supported by Democratic Governor Janet Napolitano, and supported by 10 years of legislative action, provides \$1 million dollars in annual revenue that is only used for grants throughout the state.

We need to make it clear to our elected officials that this endowment—which is a true example of a private-public partnership—is not a savings account or a rainy-day fund, but a true endowment which should be preserved by our legislature as it would in any business or nonprofit setting.

We need to be active and vocal as arts advocates this year in protecting the valuable programs and resources that support arts participation for our citizens across the state. In a moment I will introduce the Executive Director of Arizona Citizens for the Arts, Ms. Brenda Sperduti. Please listen closely to her remarks and consider joining her and me as we share the stories of the impact of the arts across this state with our governor and members of our state legislature.

I end today with some final hopes and dreams for our state. Many of you have heard them before, but they remain true and I believe shine a light on what we all believe.

I want **mayors and city councils across Arizona** to be as proud of arts organizations as they are of their banks, their hospitals, their shopping malls, and their corporate centers.

I want our **legislators and congressional leaders** to know that public funding for the arts is good thing, a responsible action, and a smart move to increase economic development, community growth, and cultural understanding across our state and our country.

I want our **children** as they walk by an arts center, a gallery, a theatre, or a library to know what's going on inside. I want them to know that it is a safe place where they are welcome anytime.

I want **parents** to know that filling their vans with kids to take to music lessons and theater practice is as important as taking their kids to the soccer games or swimming pools.

I want **parents** to challenge their school boards, superintendents, and principals to make sure the arts have a place in their child's education.

And I want **neighbors** to be proud of the fact that living next door to them is a painter, or an actor, a musician, a poet, or a dancer.

I want you to know that the work you do each day in your community to build the arts in Arizona is so very important to our future as a great State.

I thank you for your passion, your hard work, your creativity, and, of course, your role as artists, educators, and leaders in Arizona. Thank You!